

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
0900 hrs., 20 March 1953

VIET MINH OFFENSIVE APPEARS IMMINENT

Indications of an early Viet Minh offensive in northern Indochina are growing. Enemy preparations for a campaign are being constantly reported, and only six weeks of good weather remain before military activity will be hampered by the rainy season. Although there is no conclusive intelligence on the direction and strength of the coming offensive, a strong threat to northern Laos appears to be developing.

25X1

The divisions in question have been regrouping and training since their last offensive was concluded in January and are considered to be combat ready. In addition, evidence of the receipt of large quantities of supplies and equipment from Communist China under a plan which was to be concluded by 15 February suggests that the resupplying of these divisions has been carried out.

25X1

Document No.	022
No Change to Mars.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Special	
Class. changed To:	TS S C
Auth:	UN 70-2
Date:	10 JUL 1978

25X1

Although the objective of northern Laos is most strongly indicated, several courses of action are open to the Viet Minh. It may choose to make a diversionary attack on Sam Neua in order to conceal its preparations for a major campaign against the Tonkin Delta, where rice supplies essential to the Viet Minh economy will soon be harvested. A threat to Laos would also weaken the Delta in proportion to the number of French Union troops withdrawn to meet that threat.

If a major effort against Laos is planned, it is possible that the Viet Minh will take advantage of weak French defenses in that area to drive to the Mekong River and toward the border of Thailand, thus extending their territorial gains of last winter in adjacent northwestern Tonkin. While the post of Sam Neua has been reinforced, the French Commander in Tonkin recently returned from northern Laos with a "very poor impression" of its defensive possibilities.

Difficult terrain and problems of supply, together with the onset of the rainy season late in May, will however militate against an extended campaign. Therefore, the immediate and limited objective of Sam Neua, a post now guarded by only three battalions, appears the more likely for an offensive in the west.